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ABSTRACT

As part of their efforts to help the child welfare system develop integrated strategies, approaches, and policies that assist agencies as they recruit and prepare foster families, adoptive families, and staff to meet the needs of adolescents in foster care, the National Resource Center for Youth Development engaged in a year-long study of child welfare policy that included a review of federally funded adolescent adoption demonstration projects and sponsorship of a think tank to address the issues associated with the Adoption and Safe Families Act in relationship to adolescents. This three-part monograph provides information on issues and possibilities related to permanency for adolescents, implications of permanency on independent living services, and barriers to adolescent permanency. Part 1 provides an overview of the permanency issues for older youth in care, including a discussion of adolescent needs and barriers to adolescent adoption or permanent placements. Part 2 presents findings and outcomes of the Adolescents and Permanency Think Tank which brought together state independent living coordinators, state foster care workers, state adoption workers, and youth to work in small groups to identify specific strategies related to relationships with caring peers and adults, youth-driven change, youth-defined family connections, organization and workforce enhancement, and adoption as an option. Part 3 offers eight recommendations for achieving permanency for adolescents as a national agenda and challenge to states to focus on adolescents' specific needs. The report's four appendices list Think Tank partcipants and summarize group discussions and force field analysis results. (Contains 22 references.) (KB)

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PERMANENCY PLANNING:

Creating Life Long Connections

What Does It Mean for Adolescents?

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A special thanks to Drenda Lakin, Director of the National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption, and Sarah Greenblatt, Director of the National Resource Center for Permanency Planning. This was truly a collaborative effort which made it possible for us to bring together a diverse group of service providers, academics, policy experts, parents and youth who have experienced foster care and adoption first hand.

Finally, we are especially grateful to the think tank participants who gave up two days to come to Tulsa, Oklahoma to identify the issues and suggest recommendations regarding achievement of safety, permanency and well-being for adolescents in the child welfare system. Their commitment to improving outcomes for adolescents was highly evident and is reflected throughout this document.

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Contents

INTRODUCTION 7

Project Overview 8

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM 10

Meeting the Needs of Adolescents in Foster Care 10

Adolescent Development 12

Permanency for Adolescents 13

ADOLESCENTS AND PERMANENCY THINK TANK 17

Wall of Wonder 19

Safety, Permanency, Well-being for Adolescents 21

Identification of Supports 22

Driving and Restraining Forces 23

Strategies and Recommendations 24

Think Tank Conclusions 29

NEXT STEPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 30

CONCLUSION 31

REFERENCES 33

APPENDIX A:
List Of Think Tank Participants 33

APPENDIX B:
Wall Of Wonder 34

APPENDIX C:
Supports Necessary To Achieve Safety,
Permanency And Well-Being For Youth 36

APPENDIX D:
Force Field Analysis 38

Introduction

The passage of the Adoption and Safe Families Act in 1997 represented the legislative culmination of a period of intense national scrutiny of the child welfare system that started in the early 1990's. In the mid-1990's the numbers of children in foster care reached an all time high, the costs associated with the care of these children were escalating, caseloads carried by workers were steadily on the rise and a number of tragic stories received national coverage highlighting the failures of this overwhelmed system. This public crisis was coupled with an internal struggle that resulted in confusion and unclear goals.

Children often languished in foster care for years, drifting from placement to placement, or remained in the uncertain limbo of the foster care system, until they reached the age of maturity, at which time they "aged-out" of the system with little support or emotional connections.

The child welfare system struggled to balance the preservation of the family with a child's need for safety. This confusion is attributed to a lack of clarity in the reasonable efforts provisions of the 1980 Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act, which required states to demonstrate such efforts to prevent removal of children from their homes and/or to reunify them with their families. Too often these provisions were interpreted to mean that all attempts, even those considered beyond reasonable, to preserve or reunify a family were to be exhausted before pursuing an alternative permanent home for a child. This resulted in children languishing in foster care for years, drifting from placement to placement, or remaining in the uncertain limbo of the foster care system, until they reached the age of maturity (18 or 21 depending on the state) at which time they "aged-out" of the system with little support or emotional connections to aid in the difficult transition into self sufficiency.

Parents and children were often seen as adversaries, rather than as a unit that required support and services to make necessary changes to maintain the health, safety and well-being of each individual member. Social workers, supervisors, attorneys, mental health professionals, and other crucial service personnel were often at odds — although everyone was working with the same family members, there was little collaboration or joint decision-making.

The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) was enacted to address these concerns and refocus attention on children's needs for safety, permanency and well-being. The legislation attempts to reduce the amount of time children spend in temporary out of home care and to place more children and youth in permanent homes. As the challenge moves from the national arena to states and local communities, state and private agencies are faced with the task of implementing the provisions of ASFA and finding new ways to do the difficult work of child welfare.

In order to meet the new, expedited time frames of ASFA, child welfare staff must rethink how services are provided. They must consider how safety can be ensured while still protecting familial relationships, how permanency can be achieved for a diverse population of children — many with multiple and complex needs, and how the state can ensure a child who has experienced the trauma of abuse and/or neglect, as well as the trauma associated with placement in the foster care system, can reach their greatest potential. The answers to these difficult questions have eluded the child welfare system for decades. The reality is there is no one answer for all of the families and children involved in child welfare systems around the country. However, there are new ways to think about service delivery, to consider what children and their families need, and to begin to build bridges among dedicated and talented personnel who for too long have focused solely on their segment of the system.

Project Overview

For the past fourteen years, the University of Oklahoma National Resource for Youth Development has focused specific attention on the unique strengths and needs of adolescents in care through training, technical assistance and conferences. While there is a lack of clarity in what permanency means for all children in out of home care, determining what permanency means for adolescents is compounded by a number of barriers. Despite these barriers, youth have told us again and again that being an adolescent doesn't mean they don't want to be adopted or find a permanent family connection. These youth want the long-term stability they feel a family will bring even as adults.

In addition to the challenge of determining what "permanency" means for adolescents, state agencies have struggled with how this "permanency" affects the state Independent Living Program. We all know living independently without community and family support is a myth. Even with solid life skills training and practice, these youth need a familial support system when they exit care that allows for life long connections.

There is a need within the child welfare system to develop integrated strategies, approaches, and policies that assist agencies as they recruit and prepare foster families, adoptive families, and staff

to meet the needs of adolescents in care. As a result of the Adoption and Safe Families Act, the National Resource Center for Youth Development has been able to focus increased efforts on the issue of adolescents and permanency. NRCYD has engaged in a number of activities to examine this issue and provide public child welfare agencies with much needed information on adolescents' needs/desires for permanency and "promising practices" that meet these needs.

This is a starting place for states and communities to begin to examine and address the specific needs of adolescents in the foster care system.

NRCYD's adolescents and permanency initiative activities included:

- Collection and review of adolescent adoption demonstration projects funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Development and dissemination of an annotated bibliography on issues related to adolescents and permanency.
- Provision of training and technical assistance to state public child welfare agencies regarding adoption opportunities/permanency for adolescents.
- Convening a "think tank" to address the issues associated with ASFA in relationship to adolescents.

The implementation of the Adoption and Safe Families Act, recent passage of the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, and an increased focus on kinship care has been a prime opportunity to examine the issue of adolescents and permanency.

The end result of this year-long examination is this monograph for child welfare agencies which we hope will provide information on the issues and possibilities related to permanency for adolescents, implications of permanency on independent living services, and barriers to adolescent permanency.

A primary goal of the initiative was to link state independent living coordinators, state foster care workers, state adoption workers, and youth, thereby encouraging collaboration and effective permanency planning for adolescents. It is our hope this document will provide a starting place for states and local communities to begin to examine and address the very specific needs of adolescents in the foster care system.

This monograph is organized in three parts. The first part provides an overview of the permanency issues for older youth in care. The second part presents the results and outcomes of the Adolescents and Permanency Think Tank. Finally, next steps and recommendations for achieving permanency for adolescents are presented. These recommendations should be treated as a national agenda and challenge to states to focus on the specific needs of adolescents in their states.

Description of Problem

Meeting the Needs of Adolescents in Foster Care

The Adoption and Safe Families Act requires child welfare systems to focus more intently on a child's need for safety, permanency and well-being. In order to meet the tightened time frames mandated by ASFA, emphasis has been placed on effective casework and permanency planning beginning at the moment a child enters care. To fully understand what this means for child welfare agencies as it relates to adolescents, it is important to have a clear demographic picture of adolescents in out of home care. Estimates from AFCARS indicate, there were 547,000 children in foster care as of March 31, 1999 with children 11 years and up accounting for 45 percent of this total number. The racial/ethnic breakdown for children in care was 36 percent white, 43 percent black, 15 percent Hispanic, 1 percent American Indian, 1 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and 4 percent Unknown/Unable to Determine.

Placement settings for all children in care were: preadoptive homes (3%), relative foster family home (27%), non-relative foster family home (47%), group home (8%), institution (10%), and supervised independent living program (1%). Sixty-eight percent of these children and youth had been in care more than 12 months with 33 percent in care more than three years. Despite their reported length of time in care, the largest majority of these children had a case goal of reunification accounting for 41 percent of the total with adoption as the second largest percentage at 20 percent. Seven percent or 36,400 youth had a goal of emancipation.

It is also important to look at the characteristics of children exiting care. During this same time period 102,000 children exited care. Twenty-four percent of the group were between the ages of 11-15 and 23 percent were 16-19+ years of age. Similar racial/ethnic breakdowns were reported for the children who exited care as those who entered care during this period. Twenty percent of these children and youth had been in care for three or more years. This number becomes more meaningful if you take into account that 37 percent of children were in care five months or less. The largest percentage of these children were reunified at 59 percent, 10 percent were living with another relative and 15 percent were adopted. Data indicates approximately 117,000 children are waiting to be adopted. Twenty-six percent of these children are between the ages of 11-18.

These statistics provide some indication of the number, demographic, and case characteristics of the thousands of older foster youth in the child welfare system. It is generally agreed that between 20,000 and 25,000 youth age out of the system each year unprepared or marginally prepared to transition to adulthood. With these numbers as background, we now turn our attention to an examination of the outcomes for older youth exiting the foster care system.

In recent years, a number or studies have examined outcomes for older youth as a result of the Title IV-E Independent Living Program. This research has evaluated the impact of services for youth both before and after exiting care. There is a growing body of knowledge indicating that life skills instruction has a

positive impact on outcomes for older foster youth (Cook, 1991; Nollan, 1997), however, studies have also demonstrated these youth are still inadequately prepared to make the transition to adulthood.

Multiple studies have shown that foster and former foster youth are less likely to complete high school than the general population of youth. (Cook, 1991; Blome, 1997; Barth, 1990; Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, and Nesmith, 1998) These studies indicate only 45 to 55 percent of former foster youth have completed high school. Blome (1997) attributes the observed differences between foster youth and their counterparts to several factors including school stability and lack of family support for educational endeavors. Key informants, foster and former foster youth through surveys, panels and interviews confirm Blome's ideas regarding the factors which may contribute to differences in foster and non-foster youth. (NRCYS, 1998; Edmund S. Muskee School of Public Service, 1998)

Courtney et al. (1998) reported 81 percent of former foster youth had been employed in at least one job since discharge, however, maintaining employment seemed to be more challenging with only 61 percent employed at follow-up. Participants were more likely to be employed at follow-up if they were Caucasian than African American. Cook (1991) reported 49 percent of youth were employed at follow-up while a full 40 percent were a cost to the community, only 17 percent were completely self-supporting.

In general, existing literature indicates the employment and economic outcomes of former foster youth more closely resemble that of people living at or below the poverty line than the general population.

Difficulty in obtaining health care is also a frequently cited problem for former foster youth. Courtney et al. (1998) found this to be a significant issue for nearly half of respondents after discharge. The difficulty in obtaining needed health care was primarily attributed to lack of insurance coverage and that medical care was too expensive. Over one fourth of the same youth indicated difficulty obtaining needed dental care again attributed to insurance coverage and expense.

Youth seek out relatives, and remain connected to foster parents or others they met while in the foster care system. It is these relationships, these emotional connections that will have the greatest impact on the young person's ability to navigate the difficult transitions into adulthood.

Several studies found that foster youth who have contact with their birth parents while in care have better outcomes than youth who do not maintain these contacts. (Fanshel, 1990; Barth, 1996; Inglehart, 1994) The importance of these relationships holds true even after youth leave the foster care system. These young people, many of whom have spent years in foster care, return to the very homes from which they were removed years before. (Cook, 1991; Barth, 1986; Courtney et al., 1998) Youth seek out relatives, and remain connected to foster parents or others they met while in the foster care system. It is these relationships,

these emotional connections that will have the greatest impact on the young person's ability to navigate the difficult transitions into adulthood.

So while older foster youth benefit from the services they receive through the federal Independent Living Program, these services are not adequate to prepare adolescents to transition to adulthood. The potential benefit of families (or other permanent connections) to the development and emancipation of adolescents has been overlooked or dismissed. Service providers make the mistaken assumption that adolescents should "move on" or emotionally detach from families and other significant permanent connections. Landsman, Malone, Tyler, Black, Groza (1999) stated it best"...the process of reconnecting with a family or significant other represents an important step toward emancipation and healthy functioning in the community, solidifying the adolescents' identity, affirming family connections, clarifying personal history, and reintegrating past trauma." In other words, they need the same permanent family connections as youth in the general population. As a system we must do better in fostering and supporting these connections for adolescents. Without them the likelihood of a successful transition into adulthood is severely hampered.

In order to begin discussion of strategies to meet the needs of adolescents in foster care, we must first understand the physical, psychological, and intellectual developmental processes associated with this time period.

Adolescent Development

Adolescence is a turbulent time, marked by emerging sexuality and rebelliousness. It is the time period in which one gains the skills needed to transition from childhood to adulthood. Though they no longer want to be treated as children, adolescents do not yet possess the skills needed to be an adult in our society. For adolescents in foster care, this difficult time period can become even more confusing and particularly trying for caretakers.

According to child development expert Vera Fahlberg, the primary psychological task of adolescence is individuation — the process of psychologically separating from family, finding a place in society as a whole, rather than solely as a member of a family. For youth forcibly removed from their families before they were emotionally prepared for separation, this task becomes further complicated. As they psychologically separate from the family, adolescents are likely to oppose rules, values and expectations. This behavior while considered "normal" often results in negative labels for those adolescents in foster care.

Because these young people do not have the security of their own home the opposition may be focused on service providers or foster parents — or may be internalized and expressed as risky behaviors such as drug use or promiscuity. While adolescents are rebellious with adults, they seem to be overly compliant with peers. At the same time they have a strong need to belong in a family and to be taken seriously. Without this, it is difficult for them to successfully accomplish the tasks that face them during these turbulent years. The adolescent is trying to answer four questions; 1) Who am I?, 2) Where do I belong?, What can I do, or be?, and What do I believe in? Adolescents in foster care need help to find these answers for themselves, as well as, information about their past in order to fill in the gaps about their roots/history.

Permanency for Adolescents

When considering practice strategies to ensure the safety of an adolescent, achieve permanency in placement and support the young person's overall well-being, one must be cognizant of the adolescent's unique developmental process. Although the above discussion is common for all adolescents, young people in foster care may not have had the opportunity to move through the "normal" stages of development and may be delayed in some areas. On the other hand, others may have matured more quickly than their peers due to the family environment or the alternative environment in which they have lived. It is important for workers to treat each young person as an individual. Though they need to possess knowledge of developmentally appropriate behaviors, they must also be able to communicate with and assess the unique needs of each youth with whom they work.

The concept of permanence is not clear-cut for adolescents in care. The adolescent may refuse to consider adoption as a placement option, they may live in a family without having their parental rights terminated, or they may choose to live on their own. Much of the debate has focused on the need to provide young people with appropriate independent living skills to aid their transition into self sufficiency versus the need to consider adoption for older youth. The options have been presented as an either/or decision.

It is clear from the statistics mentioned earlier that independent living programs are not adequately preparing youth for life on their own and that life skills acquisition alone without the support of some type of permanent family connections is not adequate to meet youth's needs for safety, permanency, and well-being. According to current estimates as of January 1999, 30,441 youth between 11-18 are waiting to be adopted. Many of these young people are likely to age out of care before an appropriate adoptive home is identified. In 1997, 5,148 young people between 11-18 years of age were adopted. However adequate post adoption services are not offered consistently throughout the system and states do not routinely track the rates of adoptions that have disrupted. It is therefore unknown how many of these adoptions remain a permanent living arrangement as the child matures into adulthood.

It is clear that life skills acquisition alone without the support of some type of permanent family connections is not adequate to meet youth's needs for safety, permanency, and well-being.

Although youth in foster care are bombarded by an abundance of risk factors and a lack of protective factors, many are able to transcend adversity and succeed in the face of great odds. A consistent, caring relationship with a responsible adult is a major factor in helping at risk youth overcome the obstacles they face. According to Robbie Gilligan in the article *Beyond Permanence*, a resilient child is one who bounces back from adversity and continues to function reasonably

well despite continued exposure to risk. Resilience is normal development under difficult circumstances. The person who is resilient has 1) a sense of self-esteem and self-confidence, 2) a sense of self-efficacy — a belief in their ability to make a difference, and 3) a repertoire of social, problem-solving approaches.

Studies have demonstrated that attachment to a supportive adult, related or unrelated, can be one of the key variables correlated with resilience. Research has also shown that even when young people grow up in high-risk environments, they are likely to have positive outcomes if their lives are characterized by the presence and some measure of continuity of caring relationships with adults, high expectations and engaging activities, and opportunities to make decisions and contributions. Resilient children were more likely to avoid high-risk behavior patterns such as alcohol and drug use, depression, sexual activity and violence and were also more likely to succeed in school, exhibit leadership and overcome adversity. Increasing the presence of these protective factors in the lives of youth must be the goal of strategies aimed at adolescents in care regardless of their ultimate placement.

While limited research is available on specific strategies to prepare adolescents for permanency, it provides some clear directions for future permanency planning efforts on behalf of adolescents. The National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice conducted an independent evaluation of Iowa's Permanency for Teens Project (PTP). This three-year demonstration project, funded by the Administration for Children, Youth and Families, was a collaborative effort of the Iowa Department of Human Services and Four Oaks, Inc. The purpose of PTP was to facilitate the permanent placement and/or permanent connections for adolescents involved in the project. As part of the project, Landsman et al. (1999) identified five systemic barriers to achieving permanency for adolescents. First, permanency for adolescents is frequently not considered a priority in light of their developmental stage. While all adolescents have a primary goal of individuation, this does not mean they do not want and/or need some type of familial support. Youth in care deserve and need the same support other youth receive as they make their transition to adulthood.

This issue is compounded when you consider youth may originally reject the idea of adoption or permanent placement. There are a number of reasons youth may reject this option: fear of rejection, loyalty to birth family, lack of knowledge about permanency options, and a desire to stay with siblings. (NRCYS, 1998; Lewis, 1999) However, despite what youth say or professionals may interpret as inconsistent with their developmental level, it is clear from the research on youth aging out of the system that a large percentage of these youth either return home or at a minimum maintain connections with birth and/or foster families after discharge whether they receive any support from the system to maintain these connections or not. (Cook 1991; Courtney et al., 1998; Barth, 1991)

This barrier is of particular concern when it comes to the compelling reasons provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act. The GAO (1999) found that some state legislation has incorporated specific examples of compelling reasons that include: children are juvenile delinquents, are older, or have said they do not want to be adopted. According to the GAO study, about 70 percent of the cases of exempted children had a compelling reason for not terminating parental rights. They found the most common compelling

reasons for exempting children from termination of parental rights were:

- the parents are in compliance with or nearing completion of the services outlined in the case plan and the family is expected to reunite imminently or within 30 days;
- the child is over a specified age (such as 12 years or older), does not want to be adopted, and has another permanency option; and
- the child suffers from severe emotional or behavioral problems or a developmental disability, and needs ongoing treatment in a residential setting or needs to be stabilized.

While there may be some adolescent cases for which compelling reasons not to terminate parental rights are appropriate, *it is important that the age of the child in and of itself is not considered a compelling reason*. It is clear that the myth about the "unadoptability" of adolescents must be dispelled and be replaced with training on the value and importance of permanency for adolescents.

The myth about the "unadoptability" of adolescents must be dispelled and be replaced with training on the value and importance of permanency for adolescents.

The second barrier identified by Landsman et al. (1999) was that sequential case management continues to be the principal method of practice. The Adoption and Safe Families Act requires child welfare systems to focus more intently on a child's need for safety, permanency and well-being. In order to meet the tightened time frames mandated by AFSA, emphasis has been placed on effective casework and permanency planning beginning at the moment a child enters care. As a result, much attention has been paid to practice approaches that expedite decision-making early in the case process, such as concurrent planning. The thrust of concurrent planning is to arrive at timely permanence for children, to reduce length of stay in foster care and to reduce foster care drift (Katz, Spoonemore and Robinson 1994).

While this strategy was initially designed for children under the age of 6, for whom foster care drift was particularly insidious, it is critical concurrent planning be incorporated into any effective strategy to prepare adolescents for permanency. In their evaluation of Iowa's Permanency for Teens Project (PTP), Landsman et al. (1999) reported the primary case goal changed in 54 percent of the cases, in 66 percent of those cases concurrent goals established in one case review became primary goals in subsequent reviews. This reinforces the importance of concurrent planning for adolescents.

The third barrier identified was that fewer permanent resources are available for older children. Landsman et al. (1999) noted two issues impacting the recruitment of adoptive families: lack of information about resources for parents who adopt adolescents and worker's lack of information and/or beliefs about the adoptability of adolescents. Lewis (1999) reminds us there are people who love working and parenting adolescent — our group homes, community centers, and schools are full of them. He also suggests that

workers' fear of not being able to deliver a permanent connection for youth may serve to inhibit attempts to achieve permanence for adolescents.

While adoption is considered the preferred permanency option. Many individuals and groups suggest we may need to reconceptualize permanency for older youth in the foster care system. This reconceptualization will require expanded permanent options that meet the youth's need for lifelong, meaningful relationships. Options might include but not be limited to: legal guardianship, adoption, or some other less formal definition of this permanent connection. Youth themselves may be our best resource in identifying individuals in their life or from their past that can serve as their permanent family connection.

The fourth systemic barrier identified was that families and other significant others most important to the adolescent often have limited or no involvement in the permanency planning process. (Landsman et al., 1999) Relatives, foster parents, group home staff, school personnel, and other professionals significant to the youth may be excluded from the permanency planning process; therefore, compromising the chance of developing the most appropriate permanency plan for an adolescent. "These participants may be the critical resources needed to expand placement options, assist in defining the central problem that will prevent permanency (Katz, et al., 1994), or identify critical support services that will ensure a successful placement." (Landsman et al., 1999)

One of the most significant findings from the evaluation of the PTP project was that nearly three-fourths of youth experienced a change in their child welfare worker during the project. (Landsman et al., 1999) This clearly reinforces the importance of having a broad spectrum of individuals important to the youth involved in the permanency planning process. Also, consistent with the youth development philosophy, it is imperative adolescents be involved in the composition of their permanency review team to ensure the best possible permanent outcome.

Finally, Landsman et al. (1999) suggest programmatic and fiscal support for intensive pre- and post-placement support services have been insufficient to achieve permanency. Building on our earlier discussion of adolescent development, it is critical that recruitment practices and pre- and post-placement services are specifically targeted at the unique strengths and needs of adolescents. It is also important to note that not only must potential adoptive or other permanent connection individuals or families be prepared for permanence, youth must also be prepared for the experience of this permanent connection.

Several issues remain clear when it comes to adolescents involved in the child welfare system: 1) adolescents need connections to adults and peers throughout their lifetime, 2) adolescents need to be taught skills that will prepare them to live independently, and 3) all youth, but particularly adolescents, must be seen as central actors in their own futures and must be incorporated fully into the planning process for their future.

Adolescents and Permanency Think Tank

In order to supplement information gathered through the literature review on adolescents and permanency, the University of Oklahoma National Resource Center for Youth Development convened the Adolescents and Permanency Think Tank in collaboration with the National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption, and the National Resource Center for Permanency Planning. In August 1999, a diverse group of 41 service providers, academics, policy experts, parents and youth who have experienced foster care and adoption first hand were brought together for two days in Tulsa, Oklahoma to begin discussion and examination of the unique needs of adolescents in the foster care system. Effort was made to ensure the voices of those with first hand experience in the foster care system were included. These individuals were valued as experts and participated fully in all aspects of the process. In fact, their presence and contributions kept the group focused on the needs of adolescents in care, with all of the complexities and realities that face these young people during this difficult time of life. See Appendix A for a list of Think Tank participants.

A primary goal of the Think Tank was to link state independent living coordinators, state foster care workers, state adoption workers, and youth, thereby encouraging collaboration and effective permanency planning for adolescents. Together the Resource Centers, with participation from the National Resource Center for Organizational Improvement, sought to examine effective practices and policies to achieve safety, permanency and well-being for adolescents.

Prior to arrival at the Think Tank, all participants were asked to review two thought provoking documents. *The Permutations of Permanency: Making Sensible Placement Decisions*, by Richard Delaney is a primer on decision making, outlining numerous issues for consideration when making sensitive placement decisions on behalf of young people. *Beyond Permanence? The Importance of Resilience in Child Placement, Practice and Planning* promotes the concept of resilience as a guiding framework for placement policy and practice, rather than reliance solely on the concept of permanence. With this information as a backdrop, participants were challenged to think differently, forget widely held assumptions and come open to new ideas and approaches.

The Think Tank structure required each participant to be actively involved and engaged in discussion and debate. Independent living coordinators, adoption specialists, state child welfare administrators, veterans of the foster care system and others were led through a group process to discuss what supports are necessary to achieve safety, permanency and well-being for adolescents. There were opportunities for large group interaction, but much of the work was conducted in small groups. The end result was the identification of specific strategies to address the permanency needs of adolescents in care. This represented only the first step in a much larger process of identification and implementation of specific strategies to meet the needs of adolescents in each community and state throughout the country.

The Think Tank was successful in that it was the first time individuals representing the various sectors of the system were provided an opportunity to discuss the important issues of adolescents and permanency. Although in the time available we were only able to identify key issues, it is our hope this document will provide a starting place for states and local communities to begin to examine and address the specific strengths and needs of adolescents in the foster care system.

James M. Walker, Director and TeRessa Kaemmerling, Program Supervisor of the National Resource Center for Youth Development, facilitated the Adolescents and Permanency Think Tank. This section summarizes the approach, key points discussed, and results of the two-day Think Tank.

To begin the Think Tank, participants were asked to answer the following questions:

1. *What is one thing you personally have to contribute to the group?*
2. *What is one thing you do not want to have happen?*
3. *Name one goal you have for teenagers in foster care.*
4. *What are your expectations for the next two days?*

Answers to the first question demonstrated the expertise assembled at the Think Tank. Some contributions individuals felt they brought to the group included: knowledge of concurrent planning, relevance of birth family work, experience with special needs adoption practice, supervision, management and administration, goals for independent living programs, resiliency research, and most important creativity, honesty and love.

There was agreement among participants that the Think Tank should not simply produce another list of solutions. There was commitment to engage in honest discussion, identify goals, establish a process for follow up and put changes in place. This motivated group clearly wanted to examine difficult issues and figure out ways to act on suggestions that emerged.

The goals participants had for teenagers in foster care could become a challenge to every agency in the nation.

- To achieve meaningful connections in their lives and community to sustain a safe and productive life.
- To develop the ability to successfully handle life transitions.
- To love and be loved by a safe, committed, competent adult.
- To have a secure base to come back to for re-direction, re-fueling, a sounding board.
- To achieve permanency.
- To demonstrate increased self-esteem through continuous positive reinforcement.
- To embody resilience.
- To be prepared for adulthood and all its responsibilities.

The participants also had high expectations for the Think Tank.

- To better understand the complexity of permanency planning.
- To set the groundwork for best practice for youth to achieve permanence.
- To develop a model strategic plan for use by all jurisdictions to provide permanency for independent living clients.

WALL OF WONDER

Participants were asked to sequentially identify the major events in the history of the child welfare system including major studies, legislation, and national trends. Participants were also asked to identify the development of organizations and affiliate groups. Information was posted so the entire group could view what became the Wall of Wonder.

What was clear from this exercise was the relative infancy of the child welfare system as we know it. The defining legislation was passed from the time period between 1971 and 1980, and child abuse was not fully recognized until the decade before. Although children had been living in institutional care for years, there was little attention paid to the need for planning for their care. Some children were adopted out of orphanages, but many grew up in care until they reached the age of maturity. Foster care was seen and used as long-term care. It was not until the 1970's, the realization was made that foster care should be seen as a temporary placement. The landmark project, Freeing Children for Permanent Placement, discovered through aggressive casework and planning techniques, children placed in foster care could be returned to their biological parents or be permanently and legally placed through adoption. The Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 mandated this practice of permanency planning nationwide.

The decade from 1981-1990 witnessed the emergence of crack cocaine, HIV, and record levels of homelessness, coupled with severe spending cuts in social programs and supports. It was also in this time period that states developed initiatives to support independent living programs in response to the federal Title IV-E Independent Living Program. These years witnessed development of the National Independent Living Association and federal funding for child welfare resource centers.

1981-1990

Child Welfare Events	*Emerging Organizations*
◆ Inception of IL	◆ National Independent Living Association (NILA)
◆ Impact of Crack/HIV	◆ Reagan Administration (1981-1989)
◆ 1984-NY Lawsuit – IL	◆ Citizens Caring for Children (CCC)
◆ Post WWII – 1980, NYC has Jim Crow Child Welfare System	◆ National Child Welfare Resource Centers
◆ Independent Living Initiative	

The number of children placed in foster care reached alarming proportions in the 1990's. It is significant to note the increase in federal legislation during this time period, 1991–1999, as well as the implementation of innovative methods of practice. The decade included passage of the Adoption and Safe Families Act. Although signed into law in November 1997, it is only recently that time frames and mandates have begun to take effect. It is clear that the future evolution of the child welfare system will be greatly determined by the implementation of this law.

An interesting part of this discussion focused on the future of the child welfare system. Participants discussed what they hoped the future held such as, the removal of the adult abuser from the home who is then placed into a foster care system rather than the child, emancipation extended to 21 in all states, poverty no longer an excuse for placement in foster care.

Participants also discussed wishes for increased funding for services, enhanced impact of technology on service delivery and additional legislation to be passed.

It is significant to note that since the Think Tank, the Foster Care Independence Act has been enacted increasing funding and services for older youth in care. The U.S. Department of Human Services also funded the National Resource Center for Information Technology to support state agencies efforts to implement effective management information systems and subsequently better track outcomes for children and youth in the child welfare system.

The Wall of Wonder remained a backdrop for the rest of the Think Tank reminding participants of where the system has been and where they hope it will go.

See Appendix B for the complete Wall of Wonder.

1991-1999

Child Welfare Events

- IL Authorization
- Family Preservation/ Family Support
- TANF
- ASFA
- Transition Housing Program (HUD)
- MEPA
- IEP
- Managed Care Privatization
- 1st Destination Future Youth Conference
- New Zealand Family Group Conference Laws (1991)

Emerging Organizations

- California Youth Connection
- NRCPP Formed At Hunter College
- Kellogg Families For Kids Programs
- Foster Care Youth United
- Director's Youth Council

From Appendix B

SAFETY, PERMANENCY AND WELL-BEING FOR ADOLESCENTS

In order to focus on the specific and unique needs of adolescents, participants were divided into small groups to discuss the following focus question and were brought together to share ideas generated.

Focus Question: If the needs and concerns of adolescents are different than younger children, then what are the safety, permanency and well-being issues for adolescents while they are in care and when they leave care?

In the box below is the composite list of the safety, permanency, and well-being issues for adolescents identified by the group.

As expected, the list generated was consistent with information gathered through the literature review on the safety, permanency, and well-being needs of adolescents in the foster care system. During group discussion some important issues were brought up that did not specifically fit into the three categories presented. These issues are worth mentioning however and may need to be addressed through other mechanisms.

Prevention strategies

- The best way to achieve permanency for adolescents in care is to keep them from entering care in the first place.

Interface with other systems

- Child welfare needs to collaborate with other systems, such as juvenile justice, the courts and the service delivery system for the developmentally disabled in order to meet the myriad of needs adolescents present.

Resources for youth in foster care who have children of their own need to be examined.

ISSUES FOR ADOLESCENTS IDENTIFIED BY THE GROUP

SAFETY

- Medical — hearing, vision, mental health history
- Basic safety
- Problem-solving around risk-taking behavior
- Idea of long term safety net
- Safe housing
- Birth control and parenting skills
- Conflict resolution skills
- Mental health

PERMANENCY

- Connections to family
- Relationships
- Continuity
- Sibling connection
- Cultural identity
- Birth family resolution — making peace with the past
- Youth driven planning
- Traditions around holidays
- Expanded definition of family
- Access to skill training
- Interdependence on community
- Ability to return

WELL-BEING

- On-going needs
- Foster youth anonymous
- Love
- Acceptance
- Making peace with the past
- Marketable skills — economic stability
- Know rights as client — self advocacy
- The ability to answer the question "Have I mattered to people?" in the affirmative
- Connections to peer groups
- Self esteem
- Mental health
- Resiliency
- Maintaining ties with people from the past
- Allowance for developmentally appropriate behavior and mistakes
- Scholarships, jobs, money
- Ability to deal with the various "isms" they will encounter

IDENTIFICATION OF SUPPORTS

Having identified the unique needs of adolescents in regard to safety, permanency and well-being, participants were asked to identify the supports necessary to meet these needs. Participants were asked to consider the following focus question individually and then as small groups.

Focus Question: What supports are necessary for youth to achieve safety, permanency, and well-being?

Small groups discussed this question and were brought together to share ideas generated. Facilitators then led participants through a process of grouping ideas into categories.

The initial categories were given headings and additional supports were included.

In the accompanying box is a list of categories identified by the group as supports necessary for youth to achieve safety, permanency, and well-being. See Appendix C for a complete list of the specific supports identified for each category.

At this point in the process, there was considerable discussion about the conflict between the need to develop independent living skills programs versus the need to effectively present adoption as an option to adolescents in foster care. The group also engaged in lengthy discussion about whether adoption is the only option for permanency or whether it is one option to support life long connections.

Although these issues generated a great deal of discussion, the group reached consensus on supports for youth that address both their need for independent living skills and permanent family connections.

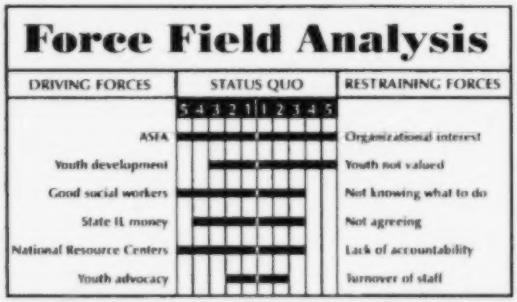
Support Categories

- Adoption is an Option
- Relationships with Caring Peers & Adults
- Youth Driven Change
- Youth Defined Family Connections
- Organization and Work Force Enhancement
- Funding
- Community Educational Support and Involvement
- "Real" Life Skills in Action
- Systems Collaboration
- Access to Health and Mental Health Services
- Youth Centered Permanency Policy

From Appendix C

DRIVING AND RESTRAINING FORCES

Having determined the necessary supports for adolescents, participants were asked to name driving forces that result in positive outcomes for adolescents in foster care. Participants were also asked to name restraining forces that result in challenges to achieving positive outcomes for adolescents. The group then discussed each of these and gave a rating to the power at which the force impacts the status quo. Those driving forces that received a rating of 5 had the most powerful positive effect on the status quo; those restraining forces with a rating of 5 had the most powerful negative impact, affecting the ability to meet even the status quo.



SEE APPENDIX D FOR COMPLETE CHART

It is important to take into consideration results of this force field analysis and to develop strategies to enhance the driving forces in order to positively impact the status quo.

Organizations should also make efforts to eliminate/minimize the restraining forces which inhibit the ability to provide better outcomes for youth.

STRONGEST DRIVING AND RESTRAINING FORCES

Driving forces	Restraining forces
• ASFA	• Organizational interest
• National Resource Centers	• Turnover of staff
• Agencies having direct access to youth	• Agency policy and practice
• Lawsuits	• High caseloads
	• Courts/legal system
	• Public law and policy
	• Lack of managing grief and loss issues
	• Culturally/racially competent services
	• Societal perception of the system
	• Training for staff
	• False belief that foster care is safe
	• Not a strengths-based system, deficit focused

STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the eleven categories of identified supports necessary to achieve safety, permanency, and well-being for adolescents in foster care, five categories were chosen for focused discussion and development of implementation strategies. Think Tank participants were asked to choose one of these five areas to work on:

1. ***Relationships with Caring Peers and Adults***
2. ***Youth Driven Change***
3. ***Youth Defined Family Connections***
4. ***Organization and Workforce Enhancement***
5. ***Adoption is an Option***

1. Relationship with Caring Peers and Adults

Participants believed strongly that all adolescents need positive, healthy relationships with others in order to successfully transition into adulthood — regardless of the ultimate placement option for that youth. Older youth not only need caring relationships with adults, but also with their peers. At this age the peer group takes on greater importance for all adolescents as described earlier. Based on the participant's experience, however, for youth who have spent time in foster care the peer group is of particular importance. The peers can be a negative influence for a young person struggling to fit into a community. However, the peer group can also provide the connections, support and nurturing the young person will need over time to make the successful transition to adulthood.

Strategies identified:

- Look to the child/youth's existing natural system to find out where the relationships have been in order to foster on-going relationships. Do not exclude the biological family.
- Teach the child/youth how to have a relationship. Address issues such as the youth's self esteem, issues related to loyalty and loss, self-determination for the youth, how to manage behavior and how to safely relate with their biological family.
- Develop an assessment tool for relationships. Train and provide support to those who are identified as placement resources.
- The worker role must include assessment, maintenance, development of relationships skills and relationships, as well as, personal futures planning for all youth in care regardless of the placement option.
- Worker boundaries must be re-defined to include the development of a relationship with the child/youth. The worker needs to be able to have time with the youth to develop a natural relationship. This means the worker should be able to see the youth regularly and return phone calls. There needs to be opportunities for strong worker/youth relationships that can be used as a springboard for other relationships.
- Prioritize the development of peer support networks.
- Offer strong youth development training to all adolescents in care. Agencies can utilize paid veterans of the foster care system as life skill instructors, mentors, etc. Veterans can be seen as role models for others still in care.
- Dollars are needed to support agency peer interactions.
- Develop a model that moves youth in foster care into the mainstream.

2. Youth Driven Change

A theme of the Think Tank was the need for meaningful youth involvement in all arenas of the child welfare system. In most child welfare systems, youth are not included in the discussion of how the system evolves and functions. Youth may be on a board or surveyed periodically, but system-wide youth are not consulted or considered experts in the field of child welfare. Their views on policy, training or practice are rarely solicited or implemented, and yet it is their experiences and insights that provide guideposts for meaningful systemic reform.

It is experiences and insights of youth that provide guideposts for meaningful systemic reform.

Strategies identified:

- Although change needs to be youth driven, committed adults and funding are needed.
- Establish a Speaker's Bureau of youth currently living in the foster care system and those who are veterans. The speakers can provide testimony before legislative committees, training, technical assistance and act as advocates.
- Require the development of positions on for profit and non-profit organizations' boards of directors that receive state/county independent living program funds or foster care contracts.
- Require the development of local, county, regional, and statewide Youth Advisory or Action Councils with funding dedicated from existing independent living program funding streams. These councils can seek political and policy changes, draft legislative proposals, meet with state and county child welfare administrators, develop collaborations with federal agencies, service providers and other advocates.
- Create youth participation in agency hiring procedures, as well as staff evaluation.
- Demonstrate commitment to youth economic self-sufficiency. Create paraprofessional career paths for veterans within the child welfare system. Recruit veterans of the foster care system and give them hiring priority in state and/or county child welfare agency positions.
- Develop mentor programs using veterans of the foster care system.
- Establish a youth ombudsman position at all levels in the county and state.
- Increase the availability of youth-focused publications. Make use of the Internet.
- Provide community-service based scholarships and tuition waivers.

3. Youth Defined Family Connections

For permanency to be achieved for adolescents, the child welfare system must focus on youth defined family connections, rather than develop a family image that does not match that of the adolescent. By starting with the youth, the worker has the opportunity to work with the adolescent and those with whom the adolescent has a relationship. In partnership, family connections that are permanent, secure and healthy may be woven together. This process may result in an adolescent being adopted, returning to their parents, or living independently. Regardless of the outcome, the goal is to create connections for the young person to provide safety and security over time.

One participant of the Think Tank shared his concept of a permanent, secure relationship. This young man was a veteran of the foster care system and in all of the foster homes in which he lived he never had a key to the house. To him having a key to the house would represent a permanent, secure family relationship.

"Having a key to the house would represent a permanent, secure family relationship."

Former Foster Youth

Strategies identified:

- Inform youth of all permanency options.
- Expand the definition of adoption to include "legally and/or socially secure relationship," meaning that the child may not live under the same roof as the adults, but there is a secure relationship.
- Convene a Community Care Review – gather a network of persons with whom the youth feel there exists a significant relationship, with input from those who have worked closely with the youth. In partnership discuss connections for the youth for the next 10 years. Use a mediator to develop a permanent plan and signed agreement between a family and the youth. The child centered plan should address strategy, support, permanency, and continuity of significant relationships.
- Help youth make peace with the past. Birth family work can be done with young people at entry into care, but by the time the youth is 14–16 years of age, it is of great importance.
- Develop a life book with the youth to rebuild family history.
- Increase opportunities for youth to interact with new families.
- Involve youth in recruitment and pre-service training for foster and adoptive families.
- Educate courts, judges, attorneys, social workers, and administrators about youth-defined family connections.

4. Organization and Workforce Enhancement

During the Think Tank many exciting and innovative ideas were shared that address adolescents' needs for safety, permanency and well-being. However, it was clear that in order for these strategies to be realized the system itself must change. Reform is needed at all levels, but it is the one-to-one interaction between worker and youth that has the greatest impact. Today's child welfare professionals must possess strong clinical skills, but must also understand the social welfare system, programs, and policies concerning the families and children they serve. Workers often do not have the knowledge, skill or ability to do the difficult, complex and emotionally draining work required of them. Adolescents are often discouraged and angry at the social service system resulting from negative encounters over time. It is important that child welfare practitioners are able to understand the system through the eyes of the youth they serve. It is also crucial for child welfare administrators to provide effective training, supervision and support to workers.

Reform is needed at all levels, but it is the one-to-one interaction between worker and youth that has the greatest impact.

Strategies identified:

- Develop a recruitment plan to find people who can do the work. Emphasize diversity — ethnic, gender and experience. Provide clear expectations of the job.
- Prioritize the retention of committed positive workers. Value efforts with better pay, create opportunities for employee input and provide quality supervision and administrative support.
- Develop effective training programs, based on adult learning principles, with an eye toward sustainability. Provide supervisors with the skills needed to transmit worker learning from the classroom into practice.
- Create collaborations — not just between systems, but also within agencies, between units, within units.
- Develop meaningful partnerships at all levels with adults and youth. Include youth in all areas of practice from Capitol Hill to foster parent education and everything in between.
- Educate the system about the importance of youth input. Include youth when making policy and practice decisions.

5. Adoption is an Option

Adoption needs to be seen as a viable and positive option for adolescents. The adoption of older children is considered an unusual and difficult endeavor in many areas of the social service system. Many believe older youth do not want to be adopted or that potential adoptive parents are only interested in young children. The adoption process for an adolescent is different than that of a young child — it must be more broadly conceived; there may remain connections to biological family members or community members. The older child brings with him experience, interests, patterned ways of doing things, and expectations. The recruitment process for adoptive families may also need to be different. However, for many adolescents and their adoptive parents the efforts are worth it.

Strategies identified:

- Expand models of adoption to include more openness and choices for the youth, such as whether his name is to be changed. Place greater emphasis on contact with siblings. Institute use of bridge families to re-educate youth on family life.
- Communicate with youth. Use youth in recruitment of potential adoptive placements. Ask the youth about relationships they have with adults. Discuss expectations, fantasies, attitudes and misconceptions the youth may have about adoption, particularly in reference to their relationship with their birth family.
- Provide training to workers in identity formation and other techniques and practices to enable them to help youth make informed decisions regarding permanency options.
- Agencies must conduct person specific assessments. When an older youth says no to adoption are they saying no or I need more information, time, family connection alternatives?
- Engage in concurrent planning. Continue to discuss adoption while putting independent living programs into place. Continue to provide training in life skills while adoption is pending. It is not an either/or choice.
- Conduct extensive assessment of potential adoptive placements. Consider the capacity of the family and work to build that capacity. Find a family for the adolescent, not an adolescent for a family.
- Recognize the needs of families today. Workers, families and youth need to work as a team. Develop buddy programs to match experienced adoptive families with new families to provide support and advice.
- Provide financial benefits to families. Adoption subsidies should match the foster care rate. Those families adopting children with a high level of need should receive a special service subsidy at the same rate as a residential facility.
- Service benefits should be provided to the family as a whole. All children in the family should be eligible for the same services, not just those who have been adopted.
- Develop meaningful opportunities for youth involvement. Use youth as advocates to educate others regarding their adoption experience. Develop youth support groups.
- Develop collaborations with other teen serving organizations, such as residential group homes or independent living programs.
- Educate workers, judges, attorneys, CASAs, and other service personnel regarding adoption as a viable option for adolescents.
- Expand community involvement through education; develop opportunities for involvement such as mentoring programs.

THINK TANK CONCLUSIONS

The Adolescent Permanency Think Tank was a dynamic, thought provoking two days. Much information was shared, ideas generated, and honest discussion had. For many it was the first time they were together with professionals working in adoption and independent living, at the state and federal level and those with first hand experience living in care to focus on the unique needs of adolescents in foster care.

The strategies presented are as diverse as the participants of the Think Tank. Though there was debate and sometimes disagreement among participants, common themes emerged.

The Think Tank on Adolescent Permanency was just the first step in finding ways to address this complex issue. The strategies presented offer suggestions for agencies and systems, but also are meant to encourage further dialogue and discussion.

Next Steps and Recommendations

NRCYD's year long adolescents and permanency initiative culiminating in the collaborative Think Tank was just the first step in finding ways to address this complex issue. Three underlying principles emerged from this effort. First, adolescents need connections with adults and peers throughout their lifetime. Second, adolescents need to be taught skills that will prepare them to live interdependently. Finally, all youth, but particularly adolescents, must be seen as central actors in their own futures and must be incorporated in the planning process. The Resource Centers will continue to explore the best ways to incorporate these principles into practice, resulting in better outcomes for youth.

States are encouraged to re-think their views regarding adolescent permanency and to consider these three principles. The strategies presented here offer suggestions for states to examine and address the specific needs of adolescents in their foster care systems. The following are some recommended next steps for ensuring the safety, permanency, and well-being for adolescents.

1. *Use this document as a starting point for a dialogue in your state about permanency planning for adolescents. Involve service providers, academics, parents, youth, and other experts in the areas of permanency planning, adoption, and independent living.*
2. *Identify the driving and restraining forces present in your state's permanency planning activities for adolescents. Clarify to whom each belongs, whether agency, state, individual and if they are tangible or intangible. Determine how to address them through training, studies, surveys, or other means.*
3. *Develop a model assessment procedure that identifies the youth's current relationships and attitudes toward permanent connections including adoption.*
4. *Develop service planning models that include assessment of a youth's relationships so existing relationships can be preserved or new ones created. Ensure these models include the adolescent in the service planning process.*
5. *Define outcomes for adolescent permanency. Make sure that every youth leaving care has a permanent connection with someone outside of the agency. Consider a variety of options that range from legally recognized relationships with biological and adoptive families to well established friendships with former teachers, staff, and mentors.*
6. *Conduct focus groups with young people, 16-25 years old, who have been adopted, had broken adoptions, been homeless, made successful transitions, etc. Find out how the state's current approach to permanency could be improved.*
7. *Use the information contained in this document and from state discussions to inform Resource Centers of on-going training needs of child welfare staff, to educate policy makers, and to begin looking at how to integrate innovative methods of practice such as Family Group Decision Making.*
8. *Work with other organizations and agencies to identify and promote best practice models and strategies, training curricula, innovative partnerships, and ground breaking public policy on adolescents and permanency.*

Conclusion

The Adoption and Safe Families Act provided the Resource Center with a unique opportunity to examine the specific needs of adolescents in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. What we found through the literature review and Think Tank was substantiation for our assumptions regarding adolescents' need and desire for permanency regardless of their history, age, and level of life skills acquisition.

To meet the challenges presented by ASFA, the child welfare system must demonstrate renewed commitment to the unique needs of all children in care. Adolescents have specific needs that are different from younger age groups. As a result child welfare staff must rethink how services are provided in order to achieve safety while protecting familial relationships, achieve permanency for the population of adolescents in the child welfare system who possess unique strengths and needs, and support young adults as they endeavor to reach their greatest potential.

We found substantiation for our assumptions regarding adolescents' need and desire for permanency regardless of their history, age, and level of life skills acquisition.

We must also find comfort with the idea that there is no one answer for the variety of individuals and families involved in the child welfare system. We must remain open to change and to learning new approaches. We must also accept that as professionals, we are not the experts. The youth and those with whom they have relationships know much more about themselves and their needs. Without the meaningful involvement of these individuals even the best laid plans are likely to fail.

It is our hope, this monograph provides a starting place to begin development of assessment tools, policy and programming at the local, state and national level that responds to the needs and supports identified as essential in achieving safety, permanency, and well-being for adolescents. At the University of Oklahoma National Resource Center for Youth Development, we embrace the opportunity to address these issues and challenge states to do the same to insure better outcomes for adolescents in care.

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Wall of Wonder

1912-1961

Child Welfare Events

- 1950's Study — Foster Care Drift
- Lawsuits
- Deinstitutional-ization
- Foster Care Payments under Aid to Dependent Children Program
- Child Welfare Services Program Title IV-B of Social Security Act
- End of Orphan Train

Emerging Organizations

- American Humane Society
- CWLA

1962-1970

Child Welfare Events

- Recognition of Child Abuse
- Single Organization Unit Federal Regulation
- 70's Affirmative Action
- 70's Affirmative Action/NABSW re: Transracial Adoption

Emerging Organizations

- Spaulding Special Needs Adoption (1968)
- The Casey Family Program

1971-1980

Child Welfare Events

- CAPTA
- ICWA 96-272
- Permanency Planning Movement
- Stanley Decision – Father's Rights (1972)
- Joaquin vs. Miller— Relative Payment
- Homeless Study — New York (1980)

Emerging Organizations

- Predecessor to NRC Youth Services
- Family Builders Network Started
- National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect
- NACAC

1981-1990

Child Welfare Events

- Inception of IL
- Impact of Crack/HIV
- 1984-NY Lawsuit – IL
- Post WWII – 1980, NYC has Jim Crow Child Welfare System
- Independent Living Initiative

Emerging Organizations

- National Independent Living Association (NILA)
- Reagan Administration (1981 – 1989)
- Citizens Caring for Children (CCC)
- National Child Welfare Resource Centers

1991-1999

Child Welfare Events

- IL Authorization
- Family Preservation/ Family Support
- TANF
- ASFA
- Transition Housing Program (HUD)
- MEPA
- IEP
- Managed Care Privatization
- First Destination Future Youth Conference
- New Zealand Family Group Conference Laws (1991)

Emerging Organizations

- California Youth Connection
- NRCPP Formed At Hunter College
- Kellogg Families For Kids Programs
- Foster Care Youth United
- Director's Youth Council

FUTURE

Child Welfare Events

- Remove Adult Abuser, Place them in Foster Care
- Home-based Intergenerational Service
- Ombudsman Program (California Bill Passed)
- Poverty No Longer an Excuse for Foster Care Placement
- Emancipation Extended to 21 for Transition Youth
- Children Aren't Considered Property "Given to Owner"
- Increase Federal Funding for IL Youth to Pay for Continuum of Care
- Adoption Subsidy in Line with Foster Care Subsidy Rates
- Mandated Youth/adult Connection
- Pay Residential Rates for Families to Keep Kids and Get Services
- Internet Used for CW Training, Adoption Referral and Networking
- Case Flow Is Improved Through Strategic Planning
- College Funding and Housing for Foster Care Youth
- Mediation
- Child Welfare Becomes More Legalistic
- Politics, Racism, Sexism Non-factors

Support Necessary for Youth to Achieve

Focus Question: What supports are necessary for youth to achieve safety, permanency and well-being?

Reason/ Vision: Towards a more youth centered and youth inclusive practice.

Adoption is an Option	Relationships with Caring Peers & Adults	Youth Driven Change	Youth Defined Family Connections	Organization and Work Force Enhancement	Funding
More families for teens	Relationship with caring adult	Institutionalized youth voice, independent and funded	More families for teens	Flexibility to recognize individual differences — Who is the young person and what are his or her needs?	Extend age to 23 for funding regardless of education
Educating the system of about the possibility of adoption for adolescents	Mentors (multiple relationships)	Build on strengths (resiliency)	Kinship care	Manageable caseloads	More money for independent living services for young adults who are adopted.
Open adoption safe connections to permanency ("family")	Mentors and advocates	Youth driven/youth centered future planning	Connection to birth families	Committed, visionary, positive, creative workers	Funding follows youth whatever permanency outcome
Need services ◆ *place to go* ◆ *place to return*	Peer support groups (Mutual Aid Groups)		More good home groups (IL, RTC, host, foster, biological, etc.)	People who can do the work — workers, foster parents, supervisors, & adoptive parents	Tuition waivers for all you in foster care
Having a self-defined family connection			Having the youth define their family connections	Need healthy agencies ◆ *stable staff* ◆ *no political appointees* ◆ *prioritize children's needs* ◆ *operate with respect and dignity*	
			Extended family	Recruitment & retention of competent youth friendly staff	
			Self (youth) defined family		
			Making "family" option viable		

Safety, Permanency and Well-being

Guiding Principles: Mandated youth voice, prevention.

Gaps: Concurrent planning (prevention), address issues of probation, fostering spirituality, other living solutions and options.

Community Educational Support and Involvement	"Real" Life Skills in Action	Systems Collaboration	Access to Health and Mental Health Services	Youth Centered Permanency Policy
Education & advocacy to other community resources about the needs of foster/adopted youth	Comprehensive acquisition & practice of life skills	System collaboration with ◆ *mental health* ◆ *education* ◆ *labor* ◆ *juvenile justice* to achieve better outcomes	Access to health care (including mental health)	Oversight committees that ease interpretation of laws and promote consistency
Youth have opportunities & support for normal developmental activities	Opportunities to actually practice skills	Collaborative cross-system decision making	Universal medical access to age 24	Youth driven policy
Community (flexible) risk management within established standards	Postpone parenting	Public systems & community collaborations		Allow re-entry into system and aftercare
Incentives for business to hire youth	Help educate youth to establish own (car, home, phone, credit card)	Ensuring U.S. citizenship before discharge		Discharge policies that prohibit homelessness
Access to educational & vocational training				Provision of after care services no matter what the placement
Community involvement for job placement				
Educational advocate				

Force Field Analysis

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